

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 are presently pending in this case. Claim 4 is withdrawn. Claims 1 and 4 are amended by the present amendment. As amended Claims 1 and 4 are supported by the original disclosure,¹ no new matter is added.

In the outstanding Official Action, the drawings were objected to; and Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs.

Applicants and Applicants' representatives thank Examiner Dexter for the courtesy of the interview granted to Applicants' representatives on May 6, 2010. During the interview, proposed amendments to the claims to overcome the objection to the drawings and the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs were discussed. Examiner Dexter agreed that the proposed amendment may overcome the rejection of record subject to further consideration.

With regard to the objection to drawings, Claim 1 is amended to recite "an entire slit is provided in each one of the virtual regions." It is respectfully submitted Figure 1 shows an entire slit 14 in each of overlapping virtual regions 13 as defined in amended Claim 1. Accordingly, the objection to the drawings is believed to be overcome.

With regard to the rejection of Claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, Claim 1 is amended to recite "an entire slit is provided in each one of the virtual regions." It is respectfully submitted that this feature is supported at least by Figures 1 and 2, as noted above. Accordingly, Claims 1-3 are in compliance with all requirements under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph.

¹See, e.g., Figures 1 and 2.

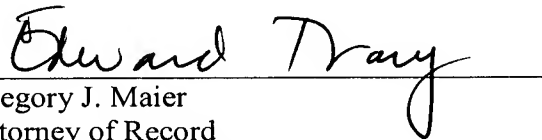
With regard to the rejection of Claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, Claim 1 is amended to delete the phrase considered by the outstanding Office Action to be indefinite and to replace that phrase with "each virtual region overlapping each adjacent virtual region in the circumferential direction." It is respectfully submitted that this feature is supported at least by Figures 1 and 2, as noted above. Accordingly, Claims 1-3 are in compliance with all requirements under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

Finally, withdrawn Claim 4 is amended to be consistent with Claim 1, from which it depends. As Claim 1 is allowable, it is respectfully requested that withdrawn Claim 4 be rejoined and allowed as well.

Accordingly, the pending claims are believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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